

Executive Summary

The United States Department of Transportation (USDOT) awarded the Georgia Department of Transportation (GDOT) a National Corridor Planning and Development (NCPD) Program grant in May 1999. The purpose of the grant was to evaluate the Georgia portion of the strategic east-west High Priority Corridor Six (HPC 6) freight corridor, to more efficiently connect Georgia's Atlantic ports to the west.

GDOT broadened the study area to include an evaluation of transportation, commodity movement, and economic development in 45 counties across south-central Georgia, including US 280 from Columbus to Savannah. The primary purpose of the study was to assess how well transportation infrastructure supports existing and future goods movements and thereby contributes to the economies of central Georgia. By adding US 280 to the HPC 6 study area, both major east-west routes in central Georgia were analyzed as part of the overall needs assessment. The congressionally designated HPC 6 Corridor and US 280 are both shown in Figure E.1

Central Georgia Corridor
Study Area

Sources: Bureau of Transportation Statistics - NATD,1999 and Day
Wilburn Associates, Inc.

Macon

Columbus

Geo

Americu

Condele

Condele

Condele

Savannah

Fort Stervar

Unesville

St. Simons

Brunswigt

St. Simons

Brunswigt

Figure E.1: Study Area

US 280 traverses approximately 250 miles from Columbus to Savannah and was added to the Governor's Road Improvement Program (GRIP) in 2001. The GRIP, initiated in 1989 by state legislation, is a network of highways intended to support Georgia's economic vitality. It was adopted into law as Section 32-4-22 of the Official Code of Georgia. The goal of the GRIP is to place 98 percent of the state's population within 20 miles of a multi-lane highway. Two-thirds of the 150 road projects in the GRIP are

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complete or under construction. The GRIP program's role in economic development is a state priority.

The majority of the approximately 250-mile US 280 corridor is a two-lane facility. However, several sections have been widened to four lanes or are programmed to be widened to four lanes in the 2003-2005 Statewide Transportation Improvement Program (STIP). Approximately 55 miles of US 280 are already four lanes and approximately 18 miles of roadway are currently programmed to be widened to four lanes.

Demographics

Central Georgia is characterized by a diverse population with low income, high poverty, and high unemployment. Several existing documents were reviewed and additional data was collected to detail population and employment in the central Georgia region. Analyses were also conducted to examine industry, freight demand, and commodity flow in the study area. Numerous studies have recommended action to reverse the lagging or declining economic conditions prevalent in many rural counties in central Georgia. Below national and state averages for population and economic growth, per capita income, unemployment and poverty, the corridor struggles to identify and implement action to encourage economic development.

Detailed data collection (including source data from interviews with shippers/receivers and carriers), combined with a thorough analysis of commodity flows and transportation infrastructure, offered a baseline from which an investment strategy could be developed. Industry clusters with distinct and measurable competitive advantages were identified, including those dependent on freight transportation infrastructure that benefit from targeted improvements. Transportation deficiencies may be adversely affecting the economic vitality of central Georgia counties.

Study Approach

The Central Georgia Corridor Study was designed to (1) assess the operations and conditions of central Georgia's existing transportation infrastructure and its capability to transport goods to national and international markets, (2) define transportation infrastructure and related technology improvements, and (3) identify potential constraints of implementing freight movement improvements.

Study activities for US 280 included establishing and applying a prioritization methodology for portions of the route not yet widened. The first phase of the study determined the current status of the corridor's economy, identified industry clusters, and estimated the dependence of industries on freight transportation infrastructure. During the second phase, system characteristics such as traffic volumes, roadway capacities, truck percentages, and accident experience were examined to understand the performance of the transportation network. This information was vital to development of the rating analysis and prioritization of projects during the third study phase.

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The two-lane portions of the US 280 corridor not yet programmed for widening were divided into 15 sections by GDOT for analysis and widening prioritization. The factors used for rating and prioritizing these US 280 sections included:

- Connectivity, Accessibility and Economic Vitality (40%)
- Safety (30%)
- System Usage and Congestion (15%)
- Pavement Condition (15%)

These four criteria were selected due to their importance in the efficient movement of people and goods. Connectivity to existing major roadways and identified truck or evacuation routes, as well as accessibility to cities, provides logistical incentive for businesses to locate in the corridor. Safety in transportation is very important to all roadway users. System usage and congestion are measures of a roadway's overall use and indicate the level of demand placed on the roadway by users. Pavement condition as a criterion can help the state avoid duplication of improvement efforts.

Once the process of rating the 15 US 280 sections using the four factors was completed, each of the factors was weighted according to its overall importance to transportation infrastructure investment and economic development. While each of the four analysis factors plays a role in the need for improving the transportation system, several were considered to play a more significant role and were thus weighted more heavily. The weighting process resulted in a list of US 280 sections prioritized for widening to four lanes.

The weighted rating of the 15 sections provided a basis for developing an implementation schedule for the complete widening of US 280 to four lanes. The prioritized sections were grouped into four tiers for implementation. The tiers were established using the weighted rating scores, with consideration also given to total estimated cost for each tier. Table E.1 and Figure E.2 show the recommended prioritization of the US 280 sections.

The prioritization of the 15 sections of US 280 does not reflect all of the factors that will ultimately guide completion of widening to four lanes. Constructability issues such as potential environmental, utility, or social impacts that may be identified in the project development stage could lead to a shifting in the order of implementation. As a part of the regular project development process, alternative alignment options, including bypasses around towns, will be considered.

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Table E.1: Prioritization of US 280 Sections by Implementation Tiers

Section Number*	County	Section Limits	Length (miles)	Cost Estimate**
TIER 1				
US 280 (1)	Stewart/ Webster	SR 520 (MP 21.09) in Richland to SR 41 (MP 7.02) in Preston	9.44	\$17,200,000
US 280 (3)	Crisp/ Wilcox	MP 11.22 in Crisp County to SR 159 (MP 4.21) in Wilcox County	12.59	\$25,570,000
US 280 (14)	Evans/ Bryan	MP 5.98 in Evans County to SR 119 (MP 9.37) in Bryan County	16.34	\$29,040,000
US 280 (15)	Bryan	SR 119 (MP 9.37) to US 80/SR 26 (MP 21.94)	12.57	\$23,620,000
			Subtotal	\$95,430,000
TIER 2				
US 280 (4)	Wilcox	SR 159 (MP 4.21) to CR 208 (MP 14.03)	9.82	\$16,840,000
US 280 (5)	Wilcox/ Dodge	CR 208 (MP 14.03) in Wilcox County to SR 117 (MP 4.84) in Dodge County	10.94	\$31,100,000
US 280 (7)	Telfair	Telfair County line (MP 0) to SR 27 (MP 11.06)	11.06	\$21,690,000
US 280 (11)	Toombs	West of SR 4/US 1 (MP 6.93) to SR 86 (MP 16.17)	9.24	\$14,860,000
			Subtotal	\$84,490,000
TIER 3				
US 280 (9)	Wheeler	SR 126 (MP 8.30) to SR 19 (MP 15.15)	6.85	\$23,330,000
US 280 (10)	Wheeler/ Montgomery	SR 19 (MP 15.15) to eastern Montgomery County line (MP 12.35)	14.80	\$38,480,000
US 280 (12)	Toombs/ Tattnall	West of SR 86 (MP 16.17) to CR 219 (MP 10.26)	11.14	\$23,420,000
			Subtotal	\$85,230,000
TIER 4				
US 280 (2)	Webster/ Sumter	SR 41 in Preston (MP 7.02) to Plains city limits (MP 2.18)	8.47	\$15,550,000
US 280 (6)	Dodge	SR 117 (MP 4.84) to eastern Dodge County line (MP 13.14)	8.30	\$13,810,000
US 280 (8)	Telfair/ Wheeler	SR 27 (MP 11.06) in Telfair County to SR 126 in Wheeler County (MP 8.30)	9.53	\$18,770,000
US 280 (13)	Tattnall/ Evans	CR 219 in Tattnall County (MP 10.26) to west of SR 292 in Evans County (MP 1.50)	5.53	\$8,970,000
			Subtotal	\$57,100,000
			TOTAL	\$322,250,000

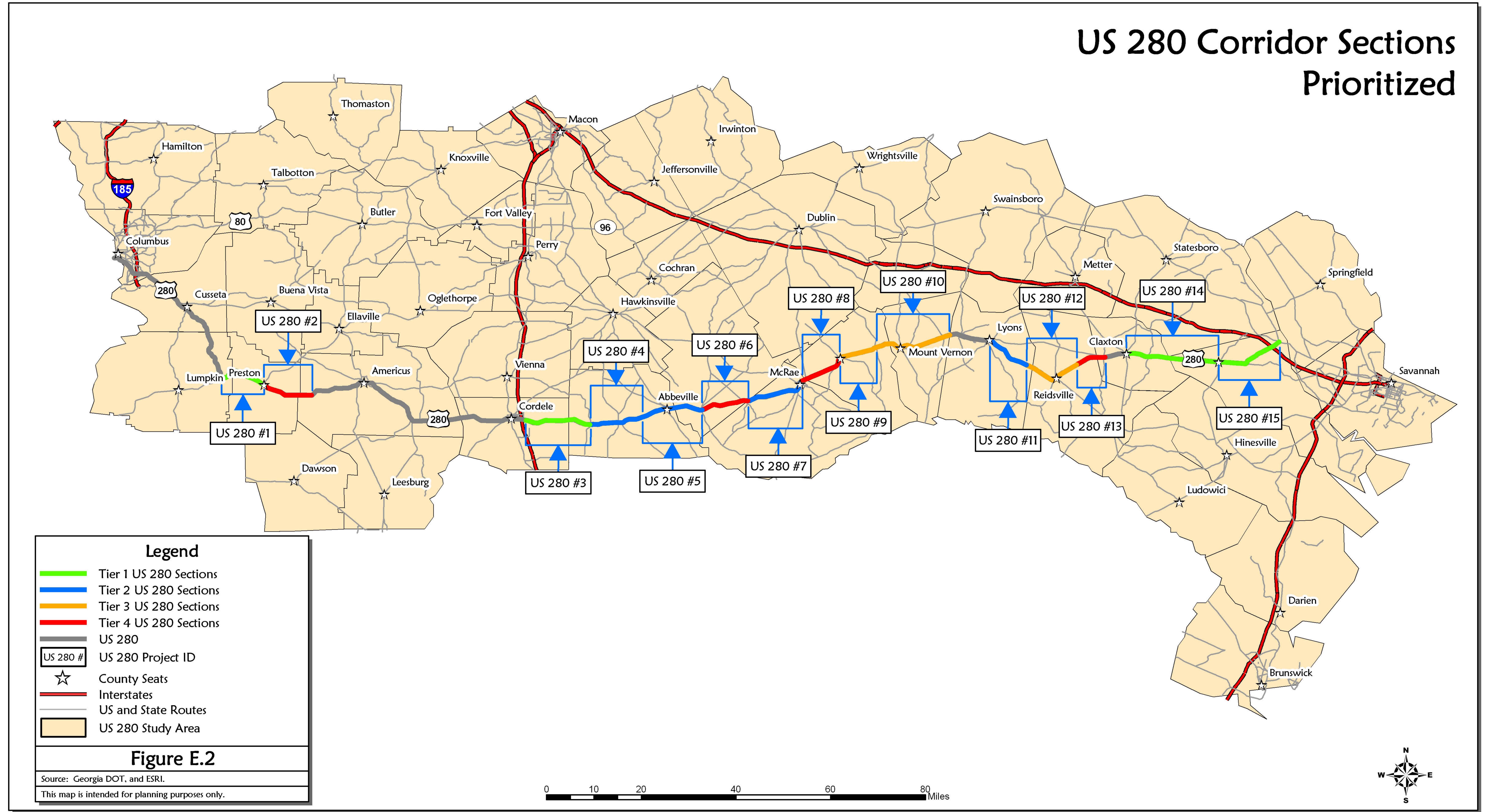
^{*}US 280 Sections are listed west to east

^{**} Includes costs for Planning, Preliminary Engineering, Right-of-Way, Utilities, and Construction











US 280 Corridor Management Plan

Because US 280 is a designated GRIP corridor, the availability of funding through GRIP will ultimately affect the implementation schedule. Economic shifts in the region over time may cause GDOT to respond to those areas in central Georgia that may most benefit from improved transportation infrastructure. The implementation schedule for the widening of US 280 must adapt to these changes.

For further details about the methodology used for the study and its results, refer to:

Final Report (US 280 Corridor Management Plan)
Phase I Report (Corridor & Transportation System Evaluation)
Phase II Report (Development, Evaluation, & Selection of Recommended Improvements)
Final Report (Central Georgia HPC 6 Corridor Management Plan)

For additional information concerning the US 280 Corridor Management Plan, contact: Georgia Department of Transportation, Office of Planning at (404) 656-5411

